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# INQUIRY

## Topic: THE KGB

*John Barron, 43, a former U.S. naval intelligence officer, has spent years studying the KGB — the Soviet Union's secret police. He is currently a senior editor of Reader's Digest based in Washington, D.C. This is his second book on the KGB. Barron was interviewed about Soviet intelligence and Yuri Andropov by USA TODAY's Barbara Reynolds*



John Barron

## Soviet spies desperate to get our technology

**USA TODAY:** What is the role of the KGB, the Soviet secret police?

**BARRON:** The KGB has two fundamental missions. The first and most important is the subjugation and control of the Soviet people in the interest of that small oligarchy that rules the Soviet Union. Another is the conduct of Soviet foreign policy throughout the world by clandestine means to promote Soviet objectives.

**USA TODAY:** Is political murder a normal KGB tactic?

**BARRON:** In the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, it was a common practice of the KGB, or the predecessor organizations, which had different titles. In early 1962, a KGB assassin, who had killed one emigre in Germany, was sent to kill another, was overcome by conscience, so he defected and confessed. The evidence does show that within the past few years, they have resumed as-

sassination as a matter of state policy. And there's a notable case of the murder of President Amin of Afghanistan on the eve of the Soviet invasion.

**USA TODAY:** What is the difference in tactics between the CIA and KGB?

**BARRON:** The differences between the CIA and the KGB are as great and as many as the differences between American and Soviet society. First the CIA has no authority or power to function against American citizens within the United States. That's not part of its assigned duties, although there have been some isolated incidents. It is not concerned with the repression of the American people, or throwing people into mental institutions, controlling our speech, our practice of religion, our travel, where we work, our political thought or activity.

**USA TODAY:** What keeps it from getting into such activities?

**BARRON:** The CIA is very rigorously regulated — both by the elected administration and by committees of the Congress. The CIA must answer to the Senate Intelligence Committee, which is controlled by a majority of Republicans, and the House Intelligence Committee, controlled by a majority of Democrats. There are powerful constraints imposed upon the CIA by public opinion, by a free press, by what the conscience of a democratic people will tolerate. And most of our major foreign policy objectives cannot or don't have to be achieved by clandestine means.

**USA TODAY:** How much larger than the CIA is the KGB?

**BARRON:** Something like 20 or 30 to one, if you're talking about those elements that are engaged in spying or covert action. The best estimates placed the overall complement of the KGB at anywhere from 250,000 to 500,000. This figure refers to staff personnel. On the CIA, the figures are classified. If you're talking just about the spies, it would be just a few thousand.

**USA TODAY:** When Soviet leader Yuri Andropov headed the KGB, it started using psychiatry and mental institutions as tools of oppression. What does a Soviet citizen have to do to be punished in such a manner?

**BARRON:** All that is necessary is to seize anyone, drag the unfortunate person before a KGB psychiatrist, who will, in less than 30 minutes, without any independent oversight, declare the individual of suffering from paranoid schizophrenia, saying that the very fact that he holds ideologically unacceptable views proves that he's mentally ill and requires "treatment."

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